

Education Committee Testimony
Testimony Supporting [S.B. 1096](#) with Modifications
Wednesday, March 1, 2023

Co-Chairs Senator McCrory and Representative Felipe and distinguished members of the Education Committee:

I am John Taylor, the founding Principal and Executive Director of Booker T. Washington Academy in New Haven. 99% of our student population are considered students of color, 82% of our student body receives free or reduced-price lunch, and roughly 17% of our students receive SPED or ELL services.

In 2018, BTWA was named a School of Distinction by the State Department of Education. BTWA believes that with a rigorous academic program, high scholar expectations, and strong moral character, scholars can create pathways to success in school, college, and life. We are a school rooted in community; our diverse staff and board are comprised of parents, community, and local business leaders.

I am also the CEO of Elevate Charter Schools, and I have the privilege of being selected as the new operator of Danbury Charter School. Once Danbury Charter School is fully approved and funded to open, it will bring an International Baccalaureate curriculum to a community that has arduously fought for its opening for well over 5 years.

Danbury Charter School was awarded an initial certificate of approval by the CT State Board of Education in 2018 but was unable to open due to the current authorization process. This current two-step authorization process prevents communities and families from accessing quality schools they want, need, and deserve.

I am submitting this testimony because I hope to receive funding and final approval to open Danbury Charter School for the 2023/24 school year.

This bill is a step in the right direction. I support S.B. 1096 with the recommendation that this legislation is implemented on July 1, 2023. I also ask that this committee approve S.B. 1096 with a modification to reverse the implications since the legislative change in 2015. This modification would allow schools such as Danbury Charter School, Norwalk Excellence, and the two new schools approved in the 2022 RFP process to be included.

Lastly, I ask that lines 249-252 be eliminated from the legislative proposal, so future potential charter school operators and eager communities do not experience the same hardships we have. When the State Board and a local community work together to authorize a new public charter school, the State Department of Education should be positioned with the funding in place to meet students' needs.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Education Committee Co-Chairs- Senator Doug McCrory and Representative Antonio Felipe and the other members of the committee for allowing me to submit testimony on these critical issues.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully submitted,

John Taylor
Executive Director
Booker T. Washington Academy

Chief Executive Officer
Elevate Charter Schools